

**Washington, D.C.** - Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois joined Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08) in voicing their current opposition to Canadian National Railroad's (CN) proposed purchase of the EJ&E line, and requested a meeting with company president E. Hunter Harrison to demand details of the proposal.

"An acquisition of this size will have a dramatic impact on the Chicago region for years to come," the letter states. "At this point, Canadian National has not demonstrated a willingness to meet the needs of the communities along the EJ&E, provide long-term commitments to the region, or guarantee full cooperation with the proposed STAR Line and current Amtrak service, which leads us to oppose the acquisition as it stands today."

The purchase, currently under review by the Surface Transportation Board, would result in up to a 400 percent increase in rail traffic along the EJ&E line, which cuts through many suburban Chicago communities. The increase will have a significant impact on traffic congestion on the region's roads. CN's proposal also threatens construction of the long-awaited suburb-to-suburb Metra STAR Line, and continuation of Amtrak's popular and fast-growing Chicago-Carbondale-Champaign service.

"CN has said it is willing to fund its 'fair share' of mitigation efforts at 'three or four' grade crossings," Bean said. "Well, there are nearly 140 crossings along the EJ&E route. That doesn't sound like a fair share to me."

"Representative Bean and I have made our concerns about this purchase very clear," said Durbin. "Without a commitment from Canadian National to invest in passenger rail efficiency and safety, Illinois communities and commuters stand to lose on this deal. While the Surface Transportation Board takes a closer look at the impact of the sale on residents, Amtrak and the STAR Line, it is essential that we continue this dialogue with Mr. Harrison."

Bean and Durbin's recent letter to CN incorporated longstanding objections that both lawmakers have held, as well as new feedback they received during a meeting of the Northwest Suburban Leadership Forum Feb. 21 in Schaumburg. At this meeting, the lawmakers led a discussion with mayors and managers from Schaumburg, Palatine, Hoffman Estates, Elgin and Rolling Meadows to address the proposed sale of the EJ&E, the ongoing crisis in the housing market and other issues.

CN announced its plans to purchase the EJ&E rail line in October 2007. CN has estimated freight traffic will increase on this line from 5 freight trains per day to about 20 per day.

In the Barrington area alone, there are eight crossings at street-grade level along the EJ&E tracks. The increased freight traffic could have broad impacts on the region's transportation, including significant delays to already congested arterial roads. Some commuters to northern Lake County towns like Antioch and Lake Villa could face huge backups along Illinois Route 59. Driving from Crystal Lake, Woodstock and McHenry into northern Cook County along U.S. Route 14 could also become much more difficult, effectively cutting McHenry County off from easy access to Chicago.

This purchase must go through a review process with the Surface Transportation Board (STB), a federal agency, who will ultimately approve or disapprove of the sale.

At Congresswoman Bean's request, the STB has initiated an environmental review of the transaction. During the initial phase to determine scope of the impact, the STB saw an unprecedented turnout at its public meetings, with one meeting alone drawing over 1,500 people. Currently, the STB is summarizing comments from those public meetings.

Click here for [Bean and Durbin's letter to CN](#) .

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